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# The investigation of the relationship between students' decision making skills and parental attitudes

Türkan Doğan<sup>a</sup>\*, Mine Kazak<sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup>*Eğitim Fakültesi, Başkent Üniversitesi, Ankara, 06810, Turkey*

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to define the students' decision making skills and parental attitudes, and also the relationship between the students' decision making skills and their parental attitudes and factors that affect the decision making skills and parental attitudes were investigated. The subjects of the study were 152 students (99 female, 53 male). Data were gathered by using The Parents Attitudes Scale, The Adolescent Decision Making Questionnaire and a personal information form. Students' ages varied between 17 and 30 ( $M=18.98$ ;  $SD=2.21$ ). The data was analyzed by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, t-test and ANOVA.

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**Keywords:** University entrance examination; adolescent; decision making skills; parental attitudes; career choices.

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## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is an important developmental stage in which many new characteristics have gained. In this period, expected from the adolescent is to develop an healthy identity. Identity formation consists of sexual, vocational and ideological dimensions. During this period, they take decisions which will affect their future life. One of the important decisions among these is the career choice. Transition from high school to university constitutes an example of a life crisis. In Turkey, University Entrance Examination (UEE) is an important examination in which adolescents reach a turning point in their life. The adolescent have to choose his career path in this period.

An adolescent needs to have some basic career decision making skills in order to accomplish this process. According to Janis and Mann (1977, cited in Çolakkadıoğlu & Güçray, 2007) decision making is something that is stressful. The main factor that affects the behaviors of individuals who are in the period of decision making process is the conflict, decreasing conflict or eliminating conflict in which they are the results of necessity of decision making (Çolakkadıoğlu & Güçray, 2007).

Studies indicate that vocational development, identity formation and establishing independence are influenced by the family environment (Bregman & Killen, 1999). Parental attitudes play an important role in the process of

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\* Türkan Doğan. Tel.: +0-312-234-1010-1046; fax: +0-312-234-1174

E-mail address: [trkndgn@gmail.com](mailto:trkndgn@gmail.com)

occupational exploration (Kesici, 2007; Kracke, 1997) and students' work preference (Özdemir & Hacifazlıoğlu, 2008).

Parental attitudes play an important role in career decision making process of adolescents. Definitely adolescents in the career decision making process also needs the support of parents. However, parents' attitude toward the adolescent may affect the adolescent negatively or positively. In the decision making process, protective style of parental attitude may influence the adolescents' self exploring and self-confidence negatively. Therefore, adolescents who have an protective parent(s) can not be assertive and independent, and most importantly can not show their potential. On the other hand adolescents who have authoritarian parents experience fear, and anxiety feelings generally and depending on this adolescents can not be flexible and can not decide about choices. Autonomy is developed in the adolescents with democratic parents. Adolescents with a sense of autonomy can use career decision skills more effectively. Their responsibility feelings can be developed. In addition, these adolescents are more aware of their potentials and have a chance of achieving self-actualization (Özen, 2001a, cited in Kesici, 2007; Kulaksızoğlu, 2003; Çerik, 2002).

There are numerous studies that were conducted between parental attitudes and decision making. These studies provided strong support for the relationship between parental attitudes and career decision making difficulties/problems (Kesici, 2007; Kesici, Hamarta & Arslan, 2008; Rojewski & Hill, 1998; Kracke & Dietrich, 2009), indecision (Hamamcı & Hamurlu, 2005), decision making strategies (Eldeleklioğlu, 1996).

The investigation of students' career decision making skills and parental attitudes who recently passed the university entrance examination is necessary. This finding will serve both for the school counselors/guidance practitioners/psychological counselors and parents in order to guide the students to the appropriate occupations and the parents to get informed. In the studies indicated above, the sample was composed of the students who are in the middle school education or preparatory students in higher education. This study was different from others in that students had just completed the middle school education and were in the position of choosing their higher education preferences. The purpose of this study is to define the career decision making skills and parental attitudes of the students who had just passed the university entrance examination, to investigate the relationship between students' career decision making skills and parental attitudes and to determine the factors that affect the career decision making skills and parental attitudes of the students.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The subjects of the study were 152 students (99 female, 53 male). Students' ages varied between 17 and 30 ( $\bar{X}$  = 18.98; SD = 2.21)

### 2.2. Instruments and procedure

Data were gathered by using The Adolescent Decision Making Questionnaire, The Parents Attitudes Scale and a personal information form. The scales were administered to volunteer participants who had applied to get vocational guidance service from Başkent University Guidance and Counseling Center.

Adolescent Decision Making Questionnaire (ADMQ): It was originally developed by Mann, Harmoni and Beswick (1989) and adopted to Turkish culture for adolescents by Çolakkadioğlu and Güçray (2007). The ADMQ is composed of 30 item and has five subscales (self-esteem, vigilance, panic, cop-out, complacency). 4-point Likert-scale was used in the evaluation of the items (0 = almost never true for me, 1 = sometimes true for me, 2 = often true for me, 3 = always true for me). Minimum score of each subscale is 0 and maximum score of each subscale is 18. There is no a total score. It was found that ADMQ's Cronbach alpha coefficient of the subscales such as self-esteem, vigilance, panic, cop-out, complacency were .79, .78, .77, .65, .73 and test re-test correlations were .80, .81, .82, .80, and .86 respectively.

Parents Attitudes Scale (PAS): In the study, in order to determine the parental attitudes PAS was used which was developed by Kuzgun and Eldeleklioğlu (2005). PAS is composed of 40 items and it has three sub-scales (democratic, protective-demanding, and authoritarian). Answers to the PAS have been ordered in a way as to be graded in according to the 5-choice Likert-type scale (1= nonrelevant; 2= slightly relevant; 3=partially relevant;

4=very relevant; 5=totally relevant). Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for each subscale. The internal reliabilities were .89 for Democratic, .82 for Protective/Demanding and .78 for Authoritarian and test-re-test reliability coefficients were respectively .92, .75 and .79 (Kuzgun & Eldeleklioğlu, 2005).

**Personal Information Form:** Personal information form designed by the researchers was used. The participants were asked about their gender, age, UEE score type planning to be used in the program selection and number of times students' taking the UEE. Age was categorized into the following groups: 17-18 years, 19-20 years and above 20 years. In addition, because some of the UEE score types are very few, they were not included in the study; only Turkish-mathematics scores and science scores were taken into consideration. Finally, number of times students' taking the UEE was categorized into four groups: 1= one time, 2 = second time, 3 = third time and 4 = above fourth time.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Data obtained from the survey results were analyzed with the package program SPSS 11.0. The data was analyzed by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, t-test and ANOVA.

## 3. Results (Findings)

Descriptive statistics for ADMQ and PAS are shown in Table 1.

Tablo 1. Descriptive statistics for ADMQ and PAS

Subscales	n	M	SD
ADMQ			
Self-esteem	152	8.09	1.72
Complacency	152	2.61	1.91
Vigilance	152	13.83	2.84
Panic	152	5.18	3.19
Cop-out	152	3.59	2.45
PAS			
Democratic	152	61.61	11.02
Protective/Demanding	152	33.98	10.07
Authoritarian	152	17.30	6.29

As it is seen in the Table 1, among the students' decision making strategies, vigilance subscale had the highest mean scores ( $M=13.83$ ). Moreover, among subscales of PAS, democratic attitude had the highest mean scores ( $M=61.61$ ).

In order to examine the relationship between the students' ADMQ and PAS scores, Pearson Correlation Coefficients were calculated. The results are shown in Table 2.

Tablo 2. Pearson correlation coefficients for ADMQ and PAS scores

Subscales	PAS Democratic	PAS Protective/Demanding	PAS Authoritarian
ADMQ			
Self-esteem	.077	.190*	.042
Complacency	-.105	.282**	.262**
Vigilance	.311**	-.105	-.252**
Panic	-.172*	.322**	.339**
Cop-out	-.106	.153	.199*

\* $p<.05$  \*\* $p<.01$

As it is seen in Table 2, there was a significantly positive correlation between self esteem subscale of ADMQ and protective/demanding subscale of PAS ( $r=.190$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Significant positive correlation between the complacency subscale of ADMQ and protective/demanding ( $r=.282$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and authoritarian ( $r=.262$ ;  $p<.01$ ) subscales of PAS was determined. A positive significant correlation was found between vigilance subscale of ADMQ and democratic ( $r=.311$ ;  $p<.01$ ) subscale of PAS. On the other hand, a negative significant correlation was determined between vigilance subscale of ADMQ and authoritarian ( $r=-.252$ ;  $p<.01$ ) subscale of PAS. It was observed that there was a

negative significant correlation between panic subscale of ADMQ and democratic, protective/demanding and authoritarian subscales of PAS respectively ( $r = -.172, p < .05$ ;  $r = .322, p < .01$ ;  $r = .339, p < .01$ ). A positive significant correlation was found between cop-out subscale of ADMQ and authoritarian ( $r = .199, p < .05$ ) subscale of PAS.

T-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the subscales of ADMQ and PAS with regard to gender and UEE score type. Test results showed that, there was a significant difference in the panic ( $t = 2.63, p < .001$ ) subscale scores of ADMQ with regard to gender. It was determined that girls ( $M = 5.67$ ) were more panic than boys ( $M = 4.26$ ) while they were making decision. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between self-esteem, complacency, vigilance and cop-out subscale scores of ADMQ with regard to gender and UEE score type. In addition, results showed that there was no significant difference between the subscales of PAS with regard to gender and UEE score type.

In order to test, if there was a significant difference between ADMQ scores and PAS of the students with regard to age and number of times students' taking the UEE, ANOVA was used. It was found that there was no significant difference between PAS subscales with regard to age and number of times students' taking the UEE. While there was not found a significant difference between ADMQ subscales with regard to age, a significant difference was found in complacency ( $F = 3.282, p < .01$ ) subscale scores of ADMQ with regard to number of times students' taking the UEE. In other words, the participants' complacency levels changed significantly with regard to number of times students' taking the UEE. Scheffe test was done to determine which group caused the difference with regard to number of times students' taking the UEE. Results indicated that, students taking the UEE three times ( $M = 3.64$ ) had a high level of complacency than the students who are taking UEE two times ( $M = 2.09$ ). Finally, there was found no significant difference between UEE score types and all other subscales.

#### 4. Discussion and Suggestions

Study results indicated that democratic attitude style is dominant among all the parental attitudes. This finding is in line with the study of Kuzgun and Eldeleklioğlu (2005). In addition, results indicated that among the decision making strategies, students mostly prefer to use vigilance style. These two finding may be interpreted in such a way: Adolescents raised by democratic parents use more effective decision making skills unsurprisingly. The participants of the study were the volunteer adolescents who had applied to get vocational guidance service from Başkent University Guidance and Counseling Center. It can be argued that, democratic parents support their children to get help from a professional about career choices.

Results also showed that girls were more panic than boys in decision making. According to the literature, paralel with this finding, decision making skills differ with regard to gender (Tiryaki, 1997; Güçray, 1998; Karakaş 1999; Kesici 2002; Güçray, 2003 cited in Avşaroğlu and Üre, 2007). On the other hand, study of Avşaroğlu and Üre (2007) showed that gender did not make a difference in students' decision making skills.

Finally, students who are taking the UEE three times had higher level of complacency than the students who are taking the UEE two times. It is thought that, it was not an unexpected finding.

As a suggestion, parents should be trained about career guidance, adolescent's personal characteristic, talents and capabilities. Family- school collaboration should be given priority.

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